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AMDG

Trinity A – June 10, 2017

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

The Great Commission - Jesus' marching orders to his disciples, and by extension, his direction to us. At the end of the service, our new Deacon Rodger will dismiss us with a form of the Great Commission, sending us out into the world to be the church, to be the face of Christ within our walls and beyond our doors.

Over the last several weeks, as we've worked our way through the Easter season, the readings and Gospel passages have moved us away from the cross, away from the empty tomb and pointed us in this direction - being the Christ in the world. Engaging fully in the life of the Trinity - the fullness of life that Jesus so completely demonstrated for us. In all of his interactions with his followers after the Resurrection, Jesus did not dwell on the Cross or the Empty Tomb. Instead he reassured them, reminded them of what he taught them. Empowered them. And then sent them out.

Do not be afraid.

Remember what I taught you

Go out into the world and proclaim the Good News.

And, Rodger, at yesterday's ordination you heard the bishop speak about how your particular ordained ministry calls you to tune into the working of the Spirit, turn on to the needs of the vulnerable, and drop out of the selfishness of the secular world. And, in so many ways that's been your way of life already.

So, now, Rodger, as we reflect on Jesus' advice to his disciples, I have a bit of advice for you, advice that I think is important for all serve Christ. Rodger, you may be think you got here today, because you're such a great guy. And you are a great guy, sometimes. And, like all of us sometimes you're not. But, that's not why you're here. You're here

because God chose you, and it has nothing to do with whether you're a good guy or not. And this congregation, your discernment committee, and many others had enough presence of mind and heart and soul to notice that your call had little to do with what you present on the outside. We noticed that there was something deep down inside - beyond your good deeds, beyond your bluster, beyond your concern for others, beyond your unfailing love of the Eagles...there was something special about you, deep inside, that God wanted to use for God's own purpose. It is the True Self. The True Rodger. That's what everyone saw. That's why you're a deacon.

In the nearly five years since I was ordained to the Diaconate what I've begun to discover is that the real challenge of this call is not in doing God's work in the world. Yes, that is difficult, sometimes even daunting. The real work is being in touch with the True Self, the part connected to God, the part of me that seeks only to do God's will, and not my own. It is the part of me that has no need to be rewarded, no need to defend or justify my actions, no need to be right. It is the part of my that is oh so illusive. And, I've discovered that my connection to that True Self only gets stronger in prayer. It is only in prayer, when I know and believe at the very depths of my soul the love that God has for me. My pretensions fall away, my fears and resentments are soothed. That firm knowledge of God's love empowers me to go out into the world and do the work God has given me to do, leaving my ego behind. It allows me to rely not on myself, but on God. Prayer is the key to my being able to do God's will, and not my own.

So, Rodger pray often, pray to know God's love for you. Pray to know God's will for you. Pray to have God remove from you any thing that stands in the way of your usefulness to God and to God's Creation. As you go into the world, practicing your ministry, be very mindful of when your ego is getting in the way - when you feel annoyed by others, when you feel the need to defend your actions, when you feel the need to announce your accomplishments. Notice those times, and own them. Then take them to God in prayer. Your sins, your wounds, are the gateways through which God enters. When your sins are honestly and fearlessly exposed to the light of God's loving-kindness, watch in

amazement as they are gradually taken away, and you become ever more humble and effective in your ministry. Your ego-self will slowly diminish, and your True Self, Your God self, will become ever stronger. That, my brother is the real work of ministry. Not the things you do, but the way in which you make yourself useful to God. As you diligently work to rid yourself of yourself of ego, expose your sins to the light of Christ and allow God to remove them. Try not to be discouraged as you embark on this work of uncovering, confronting, and discarding. It can be overwhelming. It has often seemed that way to me. But, the work of ordained ministry is not something you do, it's something that's done to you and through you. And, I have faith that God uses me for God's purposes whether I'm aware or not, prepared or not. You've reported that to me experienced that several times, God working through you without your realizing it. I just know I'm of better use when my ego is not getting in the way. Remember what Jesus said, "I am with you always."

There's so much to be done to spread God's extravagant love into the world, isn't there? For all of us, to go out into the world proclaiming God's extravagant love. And it's a daunting task. So much intolerance and hatred. So many of God's beloved oblivious to the amazing power of God's love.

But I end with this beautiful admonition from Dorothy Day, the great Catholic Social Worker of the last century. She was vilified and even imprisoned for her work to empower the poor and downtrodden. But, she remained steadfast throughout. And, these lines written from one of her imprisonments sheds light on how she was able to stay so focused - Certainly when I lie in jail thinking of these things, thinking of war and peace, and the problems of human freedom...and the apathy of great masses of people who believe that nothing can be done, I am all the more confirmed in my faith in the little way of St. Therese. We do the minute things that come to hand, we pray our prayers, and we beg also for an increase of faith - God will do the rest. Dorothy Day

So, to Rodger, and all of us, as we work to be God's Christ in the world, Let us do the things that come to hand, let us pray our prayers and beg

for an increase of faith, and may we always trust that God will do the rest.